

The Genealogy of the Scots Novel.

It is quite a common thing to see in reviews, and articles contributed to the lower class of literary miscellany, all kind of ignorant and misleading statements as to the origin and progress of the novel of Scottish life. Perhaps the most common of all is the reference to Messrs. Barrie, Ian MacLaren, and Crockett as the founders of the form which has been nicknamed the "Kailyard" school of fiction owing to the suggestion in Ian MacLaren's title "Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush" which inevitably pointed to the line of the song -

There grows a bonnie briar bush in our Kailyard.

But Messrs. Barrie, MacLaren, and Crockett, so far from being pioneers in a new form of vernacular tale, are not even reviewers, but followers at a long distance at the tail end of a lengthy procession of even more illustrious ~~predecessors~~ predecessors. Anyone with even an elementary knowledge of recent fiction must surely remember well-known names like Mrs. Oliphant, William Black, George MacDonald and others equally modern as being established authors of tales of Scottish domestic life, while yet Messrs. Barrie and Crockett were unbreached. It is difficult, therefore, to account for the continuous flood of ignorant comment on this particular school of fiction, unless one accepts the explanation that it is turned out in yard lengths by the same kind of youthful illiterates who furnish the comically inaccurate and perfunctory articles for the Daily Mail and similar breakfast-table repositories of literary twaddle.

As a matter of fact, the vernacular tale of Scottish life can be traced back to poetical and dramatic forms long before the prose novel became a recognised form of literary art, and in this respect it resembles the history of the novel in the literature of most nations. The metrical tales of Dunbar, Lyndsay, Douglas, Henricson and others down to the days of Allan Ramsay and Burns were all forerunners of the prose story of later times, and it is futile to prate of 1884 as an epoch-making period in the history of Scottish fiction, unless as producing a great author who wrote in an old-established form.

The earliest prose romances written by Scotsmen were not national in

any respect, either in theme or language, but weak imitations of the stilted tales which were current in England and France. One may, however, except Sir Thomas Urquhart's translation of Rabelais (1653), which owes much of its raciness and vigorous language to the nationality of the translator. All the other didactic novelists of Scottish origin, like Jane Marshall, John Moore, Henry Mackenzie and others who affected story-telling in the 18th century, are of little importance for the purpose of this sketch, because there is absolutely no heat-reek to be detected in their flavor. A much greater name than any of these is Smollett, who may be claimed as the father of the Scottish novel, and to some extent the pioneer in the descriptive topography of districts of Scotland afterwards made more famous by Walter Scott. Smollett's "Expedition of Humphrey Clinker" (1741) in its Scottish chapters is essentially a national novel, and in them will be found descriptions of scenery and life in the very best Kailyard vein. Following Smollett at some distance in point of time comes Elizabeth Hamilton with her " cottages of Glenburnie" (1808), a thoroughly realistic piece of writing devoted to the Scots peasant life of the period. In some respects Mrs Hamilton was the originator of the kitchen, as opposed to the romantic, Kailyard novel, and her realism was afterwards imitated in a more pronounced form in the novels of John Galt. Before referring to Walter Scott, mention might be made of Jane Porter's "Scottish Chiefs" (1810) an early venture in Scottish historical fiction by an English lady, which did something to influence Scott and his successors. Although "Waverley" was commenced in 1805, it was not completed and published till 1814, so that its influence was not felt till the latter date. Mrs Brenton, who wrote "Self-control" (1811) and "Discipline" (1814), should also be named as one who anticipated to a considerable degree some of her more famous successors. It is not necessary to deal with Scott's historical novels, which belong to all literature, but "Guy Mannering" (1815), "The Antiquary" (1816), "The Pirate" (1821), and "St. Ronan's Well" (1823) must be cited as instances of romantic Kailyard novels which had immense influence, not only locally, but universally. In these novels the domestic interest is predominant, and they furnish a gallery of Scottish fictional worthies

of great importance, even if the other characters which occur in the more historical novels are ignored. It is useless in a genealogical sketch like this to comment on the world-wide influence of Scott, and it is only necessary to state that his novels had the immediate effect of rousing up the national talent for novel-writing to an unprecedented extent, the effect of which we still feel in the modern kailyard movement.

To write a bibliographical account of the numerous Scottish historical and domestic novelists who followed Smollett, Hamilton, and Scott, would occupy a large amount of space, and require more attention to detail than can be lavished on a mere corrective sketch such as this. It will be enough if the genealogy is continued from Scott's time by the citation of some of the best specimens of Scottish national fiction in chronological order, so that a bird's-eye view can be obtained of the many parents possessed by Messrs. Stevenson, Barrie &c. This list may also be useful to librarians who desire to strengthen up what has become one of the most popular departments of fiction, and may also suggest to compilers of select guides to fiction reading the titles of some novels worth including.

List of Scots Vernacular Novels Since Scott.

- 1815. Johnstone (Mrs. C. L.). *Clara Albin*. 1815.
- *The Edinburgh Tales*. 1815.
- 1818. Frier (Susan C.). *Marriage: a novel*. 1818.
- *The Inheritance*. 1824.
- *Destiny: or the chief's daughter*. 1831.
- Hogg (James). *The Brownie of Bodysbeck and other Tales*. 1818.
- *Winter Evening Tales, collected among the cottagers in the South of Scotland*. 1820.
- 1819. Balfour (Alex.). *Campbell, or the Scottish probationer*. 1819.
- 1821. Galt. *Annals of the Park*. 1821.
- *The Argyll Legation*. 1821.
- *The Provost*. 1822.
- *As Andrew Wyllie of that ilk*. 1822.
- *The Last of the Lairds*. 1826.
- *The Outlaw, or the Lairds of Gnippy*. 1833.

1822. Lockhart (J. G.). Some Passages in the Life of Mr Adam Blair. 1822.
- History of Matthew Wald. 1824.
- Cunningham (Allan). Traditional Tales of the English and Scottish peasantry. 1822.
- Wilson (John). Noctes Ambrosianae. 1822-1825.
- Lights and Shadows of Scottish life. 1822.
1824. Picken (Andrew). Tales and Sketches of the West of Scotland. 1824.
- The Secretarian. 1829.
- The Dominic's Legacy. 1830.
1825. Lauder (Mr L. D.). Lockhart's. 1825.
- The Wolfe of Badenoch. 1827.
1827. Hamilton (Thos.). The Youth and manhood of Cyril Thornton. 1827.
1828. Moss (D. M.). The Life of Mavis Waugh. 1828.
1835. Wilson (J. M.). Alex. Lighton and others. Historical, Traditional and Imaginative Tales of the Borders. 1835-40.
1836. Sinclair (G.). Modern accomplishments. 1836.
1838. Bethune (Alex). Tales and sketches of Scottish peasantry. 1838.
- The Scottish Peasant's Fireside. 1843.
1845. Aytoun (W. G.). How we got up the Glenmutchkin's Railway. 1845.
- How I became a yeoman. 1846.
- How I stood for the Dunsdaily Burghs. 1847.
- The Raid of Annaboll. 1851.
(all published in Blackwood's magazine).
- Aird (Thomas). The Old Bachelor in the old Scottish Village. 1846.
1846. Grant (J.). The Romance of Wals. 1846.
- The White Cockade. 1846.
1849. Oliphant (Mrs). Passages in the Life of Mrs Margaret Maitland. 1849.
- Merklend. 1851.
- Adam Graeme. 1852.
- Lilliesleaf. 1855.
- The Laird of Norlaw. 1858.
- Kirsten. 1890.
1858. Roy (George). Generalship. Glasgow. 1858.
- ~~1858~~ Brown (John). Rab and his friends. 1858.

1862. Whyte-Melville (J. G.) (~~David Elginbrod~~)
Macdonald (George). David Elginbrod. 1862.
- Alec Forbes of Howglen. 1865.
- Annals of a quiet neighbourhood. 1866.
- Robert Falconer. 1868.
- Malcolm. 1874.
- Marquis of Lossie. 1877.
- Sir Gibbie. 1879.
- Donald Grant. 1884.
- Heather and Snow. 1893.
1864. Latta (W. D.). Lammie Bodkin, or the humours of a Scottish
taylor. Dundee, 1864.
1866. Millo (George). The Beggar's Benison..... a Clydesdale story. 1866.
- Braigclutha, a tale of old Glasgow. 1878.
1867. Macleod (Norman). The Starling. 1867.
1869. Gibbon (Chas.). Robin Gray. 1869.
- For Lack of Gold. 1871.
1870. Black (Wm.). A Daughter of Beth. 1870.
- A Princess of Thule. 1874.
- Macleod the Dare. 1879.
- White Wings. 1880.
- Whamond (A.). James Locket, a humorous tale of Scottish
Life. (c. 1870).
1871. Alexander (Wm.). Johnny Gibb of Gushetneuk. 1871.
Lockhart (L. W. M.). Fair to see. 1871.
- Mine is thine. 1878.
1883. Swan (Annie L.). Aldersyde. 1883.
- Carlownie. 1884.
- The Gate of Eden. 1886.
1886. Stevenson (R. L.). Kidnapped. 1886.
- Catriona. 1893.
- The Master of Ballantrae. 1888.
- The Wrecked. 1891.
- Weir of Hermiston. 1896.

1888. Barrie (J. M.). *Auld Licht Idylls*. 1888.
 - *A Window in Throuma*. 1889.
 - *The Little Ministers*. 1891.
 - *Sentimental Tommy*. 1896.
 - *Tommy and Grizel*. 1900.
 1891. Gordon (Alex.). *The Folks o' Carglen, or life in the north*. 1891.
 1892. Todd (Margaret). *Mona Maclean*. 1892.
 1893. Crockett (L. R.). *The Stickit Ministers*. 1893.
 - *The Raiders*. 1894.
 - *The Lilac Sun-bonnet*. 1894.
 - *Oleg Kelly*. 1896.
 - *Lad's Love*. 1894.
 - *Kit Kennedy*. 1899.
 Hepburn (L.). *Gabriel Stoun. BarnCraig: Episodes in the life of a Scottish village*. 1893.
 - *Robert Urquhart*. 1896.
 1894. Watson (John). *San Maclean. Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*. 1894.
 - *The Days of Auld Lang Syne*. 1895.
 - *Kate Carnegie*. 1896.
 1901. Brown (G. D.). *George Douglas The House with the Green Shutters*. 1901.

1903. Bell (J. J.). *Wee Macgregor*. 1903.

1904. Munro (Neil). *Hugh Louis Erchie, my droll friend*. 1904.

A certain number of these novels are now out of print, and await the coming of the enterprising publisher who likes reprinting "Jane Eyre" and the "Pilgrim's Progress". Some of the more obscure books in the foregoing list are in reality the prototypes of more modern and better known efforts. For instance, George Roy's "Generalship" is a remarkable anticipation of two recent successful tales of Glasgow life - "Wee Macgregor" and "Erchie". In all that relates to the pawky characterisation of ordinary types of Glasgow life, "Generalship" is the undoubted parent of the two tales just named, and the resemblance in general style will easily be detected by anyone who cares to worry through the dialect. In similar fashion the weavers, butchers, tailors, and other stock characters of Munro Barrie and Co., have been

reproduced since Gallo's time by Moir, Aytoun, Aird, Latta,
Whamond and Alexander in every variety of presentation. The only
difference is in the change of locality and period, but in many
respects Latta's *Life*, Whamond's *Torfarshire*, and Alexander's
Aberdeenshire are superior in every way to the idealized *Thrum*
of Baxie and the Galloway mosaic of Crockett. So, too, have
all the phases of sentimental pathology cultivated by Annis Swan and Ian
Maclaren been anticipated, and even suggested, in Wilson's *Tales of the
Borders* and in miscellanies like *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* and the
People's Friend, which in their day have anatomised and explored
every kind of lachrymal avenue connected with lowly Scots life. In
a hasty sketch like this, including a far from representative selection
of titles, many of the older writers have been omitted, but it may be
pointed out that, among a past generation who did something to
record Scottish life and customs in various aspects, mention should be
made of A. R. Keach, James Hannay, J. Baillie Fraser, David Rae, R.
M. Daniel, Archibald Boyd, James Smith, Robert Pollok, Leitch Ritchie,
John Skelton and James Ballantyne. A later generation would include
Sarah Lytton, Florence Montgomery, Mrs Walford, The Gerard Sisters,
Mrs Moleworth, Flora A. Steel, Christie Murray, Henry Johnston, William
Sharp ("Fiona Macleod"), Leslie Keith, Sophie Veitch, "Curtis Yorke" and
Rita. Quite recent contributors are Neil Munro, Conan Doyle, J. A.
Stewart, D. S. Macdougall, Miss Keddie, The Lindblatts, John Buchan,
Andrew Balfour and numerous others, to be found in every Public
Library catalogue. Some of these authors have not specialised in tales
of Scottish life and character, but have in many ways (~~specialised~~)
revealed knowledge and sympathy where national matters have been
concerned. The main effect of this sketch of the genealogy of a school of
fiction, conjoined with the mistakes made in current literary journals
concerning its origin, is to emphasise the transitory nature of all styles
or fashions in literature. People of the present day who read about
smugglers in recent novels forget that Scott's *"Guy Mannering"* and
"Redgauntlet" are almost complete repertoires of all the usual properties,
even down to the caverns and the gin. Other readers of treasure hunting
crack up the virtues of Stevenson's *"Treasure Island"* and forget Poe's *"Gold"*

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Bug" and Dumas' "Count of Monte Christo." There were distressed and highly cultivated governesses and other domestics long before Miss Rosa Carey and the many others who followed Charlotte Brontë in the use of this hackneyed character, started to exploit her. She appears in Sam. Richardson and even earlier, and it would be an interesting exercise in research work for some ambitious library assistant qualifying for a diploma, to trace the genesis and progress of the Educational Dredge in literature. People forget so rapidly what they read in the realms of prose fiction and poetry, that it is fairly safe to take almost any plot or story more than twenty years old, re-christen it, and issue as a new book! No one would ever notice the deception, and it might be a profitable speculation for an enterprising publisher. If some of the older Scottish tales were re-issued in modern forms they would be hailed as new Kailyards, and the critics would compare the masterpiece with the earlier productions of Messrs. Barrie and Co!